up. A few more years and I'd have escaped by dying myself. I nearly tripped and stumbled over my mother's death. Death would have caught me for sure. It barely affected my stride.

Death is everywhere. Death comes out of the House, stands leering between Serge and Patricia the Stinker, and leans on the railing of the steps next door. Death has Adam's gauntness without the pain. Adam's gauntness was Death's to begin with. The ashes in the can have more substance than Adam has now.

Death is no usurper. Death is a restored monarch re-establishing his reign. Adam was my protector but I wasn't his successor. Death settled that affair of state.

Death is next in line at the "No Frills." Death waits behind the cash with his bony hand on the till where anyone can see it if he will. He can't steal what's his by reversion. He wouldn't bother.

Death is not very frilly but very obsequious. The cashier weeps to see me bearing the purple bin. Death is in the no-name chicken strips and the white breast-meat nuggets. On every pack of Lucky Strikes a pale Death's Head pre-empts the Surgeon General's warning.

My clothes are stained with bleach and covered with ashes where Adam's bony fingers have touched them. Holes